

Appleby Westward Group Limited Paris Newsletter: The Humphreys Reach Their Silver Anniversary



Wiveliscombe store owners Brian and Barbara Humphrey are celebrating 25 years with SPAR.

The couple took over the store, a former County Stores shop in the small Somerset town after deciding to pursue a new direction in life after Brian lost his job as a kitchen fitter in West Sussex.

“We looked at businesses in the West Country and found this old shop which sold an obscure mix of things like loose currants and sultanas, sherry dispensed from barrels and even ground its own coffee,” said Brian (60).

But the couple found that the [business](#) was struggling and Brian had to supplement their income by working as a painter and decorator. “Then one day a representative from SPAR called to say that Wiveliscombe was crying out for a convenience store,” he said. “We decided to take the plunge, borrowed some more money from the bank, and re-opened as a [SPAR](#) store.”

“The first night we opened, customers were queuing out of the door to get in and we knew we had made the right decision. The town was dead in the evening, and we were the first shop to have extended opening hours. We went from turning over about £1,000 a week to £6,000 a week in no time at all.”

Over the years, Brian and Barbara have doubled the size of their store and continually invested in improving the business. “We firmly believe in the importance of putting money back in as you cannot stand still in this business - continual improvement is essential,” said Brian.

He and Barbara have always been careful to foster a personal shopping experience for their customers. "Ours is very much a social store with its own unique atmosphere and we like to think it is very much at the heart of the community," he said. "If we can go the extra mile for our customers, we will."

He has seen many changes. "Convenience retailing has become much more professional these days, but in many ways ours is not a typical convenience store. It is heavily grocery-based and we still do things like farmers accounts - but we have stopped serving sherry out of barrels!"

The store has a food-to-go offer including hot food, sandwiches and baguettes, bean to cup coffee for customers, a range of fresh produce, a full grocery offer, off licence, National Lottery and Paypoint.

To mark their 25th anniversary, Brian and Barbara held a store fun day with tastings, goody bags, promotions and prices on some selected items from 25 years ago.